

PREFACE

Drinking water is a resource critical to the continued existence and prosperity of society although its true value is rarely appreciated in Rhode Island, as it has always been plentiful, of high quality, and readily available throughout the state. Public water suppliers, conscious of this perception, direct their resources and management strategy toward guaranteeing a continuous and uninterrupted supply of quality water to consumers.

From time to time, however, a crisis arises that has the potential to compromise both the supply and quality of our water resources; and the veritable significance of the resource is both realized and appreciated. Situations like the 1988 gasoline leak and near-contamination of groundwater wells in Westerly, the oil tank truck spill that threatened the Woonsocket water supply in 1989, and the widespread bacterial contamination of the water distribution system in Pawtucket in the summer of 1992 are not easily forgotten.

Recognizing that there is shared responsibility among state agencies, water suppliers, and municipal governments in responding to emergency situations, the Governor appointed the Advisory Committee on Water Emergencies (Advisory Committee) by Executive Order on November 5, 1992. The Executive Order (see Appendix A) charges the Advisory Committee with assisting the Division of Planning in preparation of a state plan for water emergencies and recommending the necessary steps to prepare the state better for water emergencies.

The Advisory Committee was formed because of the lack of a comprehensive state plan for water emergencies and because of the need to establish efficient and coordinated emergency communication and response procedures to address water emergencies. It is composed of state agency representatives, water consultants, water suppliers, and other advisors as deemed necessary by the Governor.

A separate document produced in conjunction with this plan lists key contacts related to water emergencies in Rhode Island. The Emergency Resource Directory for Water Supply Management (Resource Directory) includes detailed sections for contacts in all levels of government, utilities, media, equipment, suppliers, and volunteer services related to water emergency response. Copies may be obtained from the Division of Planning. The plan and directory were written by Kathleen M. Leddy, Principal Environmental Planner, with guidance from the Advisory Committee. Direction was provided by Victor J. Parmentier, Supervising Planner, and Susan P. Morrison, Chief, Office of Systems Planning. The final copy was produced for offset reproduction by Kim A. Gelfuso, Senior Word Processing Typist.

The plan was part of Task 202 of the Division of Planning's FY 1993 Work Program and was funded by state appropriations. The State Planning Council adopted this plan as an element of the State Guide Plan on May 13, 1993. In an effort to maintain the utility of this plan, the emergency contact information was updated in December 2002.